COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

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13 Members of Congress visit Baltic States and Moscow

A delegation of 13 Members of Congress, led by Helsinki Commission Chairman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), visited the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia from February 11-15.

It was the first official U.S. delegation to visit the Baltics since the bloodshed in Lithuania and Latvia in January.

The delegation arrived in Riga, Latvia on February 11 and met the following day with Latvian President Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis and Latvian Communist Party First Secretary Alfred Rubiks.

Chairman Hoyer also addressed a session of the Latvian Supreme Council (Parliament) where he reiterated US Congressional support for Baltic observer status in the CSCE process.

On February 13, the delegation traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania for meetings with Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis and Prime Minister Gedyminas Vagnoris, followed by a visit to the TV and Radio tower still occupied by Soviet military forces.

Travelling to Tallinn, Estonia on February 14, the delegation met with Estonian President Arnold Ruutel and other Estonian government and parliamentary officials before departing for Moscow.

In Moscow, the delegation met on February 15 with Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Republic—the first high level meeting the Russian President has had with U.S. officials since early last fall.

The Members of Congress also met with Rafik Nishanov, Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet's Council of Nationalities prior to their return to the United States that evening.

Members of Congress participating in the delegation in addition to Hoyer, included: Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), Rep. Don Ritter (R-Pa.), Rep. Christopher Smith (R-N.J.), Rep. Albert Bustamante (D-Texas), Rep. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Rep. Christopher Cox (R-Calif.), Rep. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Rep. Dennis Hertel (D-Mich.), Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), Rep. Bill Sarpalius (D-Texas), Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.), and Rep. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.).

Following up on commitments made during the trip, the Commission will send staff members to observe the March 3 "advisory votes" on independence in Latvia and Estonia.

Chairman Hoyer said he was asked to send staff to observe the advisory votes by Presidents Gorbunovs and Ruutel during meetings with the two leaders.

From the left: Commissioner Don Ritter (R-PA), Chairman Hoyer, and Commissioner Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) meet President Vytautas Landsbergis in the Lithuanian Parliament building.

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki human rights accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense.

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"These are historic votes which could have a dramatic impact on the future of democracy in the Soviet Union," Hoyer said. "Due to the ongoing tension in the Baltic states, it is essential that we have our own representatives there to observe both the outcome of the votes, and the atmosphere in which they were held."

The Commission will also send staff to various Soviet Republics to observe the March 17 referendum called by President Gorbachev.

The freely-elected governments of Latvia and Estonia have scheduled the March 3 referendums largely as a counter to Gorbachev's March 17 referendum. Lithuania has already held a similar vote, which resulted in an overwhelming show of support for independence.

The delegation meets with President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Republic.

CSCE hearings focus on Soviet crackdown in Baltics

The war in the Persian Gulf took a back seat to the Soviet crackdown in the Baltic states during three recent Helsinki Commission hearings.

Scheduled by Commission Chairman Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) shortly after Soviet Black Beret troops stormed the Lithuanian Parliament building in Vilnius, the first hearing focused on implications that the attempt to crush Baltic independence would have on the future of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Appearing alone before the Commission on January 17, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs Raymond Seitz called the Soviet crackdown "a serious mistake for the Soviet Union itself and the democratization Gorbachev has sought to foster, as well as for the Soviet Union's relations with the United States and many other countries."

At a January 22 hearing, Vice President Daynis Ivans of Latvia, and Vice President Bronius Kuzmickas of Lithuania, testified before the Commission on behalf of their elected governments.

Kuzmickas and Ivans told the Commission that Western support will play a significant role in the Baltic states' struggle for independence.

"We cannot defend ourselves against an overwhelming aggressive force alone," Ivans said. "We know that without forceful and consistent pressure by the United States on the Gorbachev government, democratization will be destroyed in the Baltic states, Russia and beyond."

The Commission convened the last of the hearings just 3 days before departing on a fact-finding trip to the Baltic states and Moscow.

During that hearing, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security advisor to President Carter, told the Commission that President Gorbachev may not be "fully in control" of events in the Soviet Union.

Brzezinski said that although Gorbachev deserves credit for many of the historic reforms which have swept through the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, "we cannot view the totality of our relationship with the Soviet Union in terms of our relationship with Gorbachev."

Brzezinski also said the United States should: continue to encourage democratic forces in the Soviet Union; formalize relations "to the extent we can" with the Baltic states and Soviet Republics; promote legislative visits between elected officials in the United States, the Baltic states and Soviet Republics; send election observers to the Baltic states and Soviet Republics; and register our concern with "international bodies" about repressive trends in the Soviet Union.

Marshal Goldman, a professor of Soviet Economics and Director of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University, and William Odom, a retired army Lieutenant General and former director of the National Security Agency, also testified at the February hearing.

Valletta meeting on disputes closes; final report adds to general principles, outlines mechanisms

From January 15 to February 8, the participating States met in Valletta, Malta, for the third CSCE meeting on the peaceful settlement of disputes. The duty to settle disputes peacefully is one of the 10 Guiding Principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

Previous meetings were overshadowed by the polarization of East-West relations and there has been little substantive agreement in this area to date.

Prospects before Valletta; reality-check in the Baltics

Prior to the opening of the Valletta Meeting, expectations were high that substantive progress could be achieved in Malta. These expectations were based on two premises.

First, in the "new Europe," traditional East-West divisions were supposedly a thing of the past. With those barriers out of the way, it would be possible to achieve progress in a range of previously dead-locked areas, including PSD.

Second, in spite of the euphoria which accompanied the revolutions of 1989-90 and the unification of Germany, there was a strong awareness of problems which continue to confront the CSCE participating States. Many commentators voiced the hope last fall that the Valletta meeting could create a mechanism capable of addressing such problems as ethnic strife, restive independence movements, and related political instability.

These concerns were heightened by the Soviet crackdown in the Baltics States just one day prior to the opening of the Valletta Meeting in which over a dozen unarmed civilians were killed.

In response, over 20 participating States condemned the Soviet violence in their opening statements in Valletta. Later in the meeting, during a visit by Estonian parliamentarian Marju Lauristen, many delegations condemned further violence in Latvia which resulted in additional deaths.

Not only were the Baltic events pursued in Valletta, but they were raised in several other CSCE during the course of the Meeting.

During the first week, at a meeting of technical experts convened in Vienna, the Austrian delegation proposed holding a special CSCE emergency meeting to address the Soviet actions. Although the Soviet Union denied the necessary consensus for holding the emergency meeting, every other delegation supported it.

During the second week of the Valletta Meeting, the Baltic events were protested at the 2-day CSCE meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, also held in Vienna.

Finally, throughout the Valletta Meeting, the CSCE "human dimension mechanism" was invoked with the Soviet Union by numerous countries, including the United States.

In spite of the tragic events in the Baltic states, delegations in Valletta did not revert to traditional negotiating blocs, hardened along the lines of military alliances, and bogged down by polarized, Cold-War style divisions. Instead, Valletta alliances seemed to be forged on the basis of shared views on specific issues, rather than along the lines of formal alliances.

Final report reflects compromises

The Valletta Report reflects the compromise struck between the desire to maintain the momentum achieved in other recent inter-sessional meetings such as Bonn and Copenhagen—each of which concluded with substantive new documents—and the reality that, at least in the area of PSD, considerable differences remain among the participating States.

The Valletta Report opens with general principles, which elaborate axioms applicable to any dispute and are immediately binding.

A second section of the Report outlines a "CSCE Dispute Settlement Mechanism." This mechanism requires the participating States, should they be unable to resolve peacefully a dispute between them, to seek the assistance of a third party or parties, collectively if somewhat awkwardly called "the Mechanism." The ultimate task of the "Mechanism" is not to resolve the dispute, but to make comments and provide advice to the disputing parties regarding an appropriate and acceptable method for resolving their dispute.

This Mechanism is, however, constrained in several significant ways. First and foremost, the Mechanism, such as it is, does not exist or come into effect until "the necessary arrangements" are established—that is, until the Mechanism is housed in some institution which will oversee the process of selecting the third party or parties. No other CSCE document has ever produced "provisional" commitments which require additional decisions before coming into effect.

Second, the Mechanism is limited by an "exceptions" clause which prohibits the Mechanism from being utilized if either party considers the dispute to raise issues concerning its "territorial integrity, or national defense, title to sovereignty over land territory, or competing claims with regard to the jurisdiction over other areas."

According to the Paris Charter, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs will "take into account the Report of the Valletta Meeting." The Council, which is scheduled to have its first meeting in Berlin in June, may or may not take further action on the Mechanism.

The Valletta Report also notes that the next CSCE Follow-up Meeting opens in Helsinki in March, 1992 and recommends that "the commitments contained in the present Report as well as their implementation. . . be kept under review."

Perhaps, at that time, the participating States will examine actual disputes, in addition to mechanisms or process to resolve them.

—Erika Schlager

FOR THE RECORD

RAYMOND SEITZ, Assistant Secretary of State for Canadian and European Affairs, during testimony at a Helsinki Commission Hearing, January 1991. "I mean really, the Baltic states should be given their independence, period. The Soviet Union has got big troubles to deal with. They ought to deal with those and leave the Baltic states alone and independent."

MARJU LAURISTIN, Deputy Speaker of the Estonian Parliament, January 1991. "Of course I want stability. We all want stability. But remember, the most stable place in the world is a cemetery."

REP. STENY HOYER, Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, during a speech to the Latvian Parliament, February 1991. "Your labors both reflect Helsinki ideals and nourish and nurture their spirit—a spirit that brought political prisoners into political office and into dialogue with their former jailers."

DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, former National Security Advisor to President Carter, during testimony at a Helsinki Commission Hearing, February 1991. "Gorbachev's (economic) reforms make me think of an arrangement whereby you would decide that first street buses would ride on the right-hand side, maybe 3 weeks later trucks would move over to the right-hand side, and then a few months later passenger cars would move over to the right-hand side. You'd get a gridlock. And that is what has happened to many of his economic reforms."

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE, former Soviet Foreign Minister, February 1991. "I think this war, this war of parliaments, this war of laws and now a war of presidents, must be ended. Everybody must think about the country, about people, the fate of democracy in the Soviet Union. It seems to me the two presidents, Gorbachev and Yeltsin, must meet and seriously discuss all problems which are now arising. They aren't simple, but the two leaders must find strength to overcome contradictions and difficulties."

PRESIDENT MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, during a speech in Byelorussia, February 1991. "What they (Democrats) are really up to is to take power. They failed to do this by means of the Congress, by means of the Supreme Soviet, but now they are using the tactics of the neo-Bolsheviks: struggles in the streets, demonstrations, strikes, hunger strikes. They wage constant psychological attacks at the existing structures."

LEONID BATKIN, a leader of "Democratic Russia," commenting on President Gorbachev's March 17 referendum question, February 1991. "It's like asking someone, 'would you like to have dinner and jump out a third-story window?' The only way you can answer safely is 'no.'"

RECENT CSCE PUBLICATIONS

SOVIET AND BALTIC ELECTION REPORT—Single volume compilation of on-site Commission staff reports on parliamentary elections in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and the Soviet Republics of Russia, Moldavia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Georgia, with an introduction. 188 pages.

CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN ELECTION REPORTS—Single volume compilation of on-site Commission staff reports on the 1990 elections held in the GDR, Hungary, the Yugoslav Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, Romania, the Czech and Slovak Republic, and Bulgaria, with an introduction. 157 pages.

STAFF REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS—August 29, 1990. Examines the causes, responses, and symptoms associated with the growing homelessness problem in the United States, and examines the problem in relation to international human rights commitments. The report is part of the Commission's continuing review of U.S. efforts to meet Helsinki process commitments. 77 pages.

COMMISSION TRIP TO THE BALTIC STATES AND MOSCOW—Report on the Helsinki Commission's recent fact-finding trip to Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Moscow. The 13-member Congressional delegation met with all three of the Baltic presidents, as well as President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Republic. The report will be available in mid-March.

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